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Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: Luke 19:1-10
Title of Sermon: Hide and Seek
Series: UnStuck

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. **3** He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. **4** So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. **5** When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." **6** So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. **7** All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." **8** But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." **9** Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

A number of years ago, my boys and I were invited by some friends to go out and run around the mountains with some quads. We didn't own them -- they owned more than enough, and so we took them up on it. So, we were cruising around and heading up into the mountains, and we were probably, I'm gonna guess, somewhere around four, five miles away from the truck was. We came around a corner, and lo and behold, is this CJ5 stuck as stuck can be. When we came up, these young guys looked at us, like, "I am so glad you're here." Somehow, they got lodged in-between these two trees, and they didn't have a chain saw, and they were just in trouble. So -- I don't know what we were thinking, but we thought maybe these quads are really, really hearty, so we turned them around, and they had some chains. They didn't have a wench, but they had some chains. We put them on our quads, and -- MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM -- RRRRRRRRRRRR-- throwing mud up everywhere. Didn't bunch them an inch. We went and found some tree limbs, and we broke them off, and we kind of pried, got underneath the axles -- we did everything we could. About an hour and a half later, I'm looking over my shoulder as we're driving away from these poor guys -- didn't help them a bit. I'm thinking to myself, it is the worst thing in the world to be stuck. I was asking my friends, "What would you do?" They said, "You know, I don't know. I think probably what I would do is, leave the keys in the rig, put a sign on it -- 'It's yours if you can get it out of here.'" I mean, what do you do? You're four miles up in the mountains! You can't get a tow truck there. Maybe a helicopter. That'd be way more the Jeep's worth, probably. I don't know. Because sometimes when you get stuck like that, there's just like, what else do you do? You're in trouble. I vowed then, "Man, I'm never -- I mean quads, no problem. But taking my truck up and getting it all dirty, and muddy -- forget it! I'll take mud off of the asphalt." I'm not getting up there! It's frightening to me to be that far up and to realize I can't get this thing out of here.

Sometimes in life we get into those places. It's not that we've driven into it -- we walk into it. We live it. We get stuck. There are a lot of things that get us stuck. Sometimes it's our shame, sometimes it's anger, sometimes it's behavior. Sometimes it's a depression that gets over us, and we just kind of cycle. And we know we're stuck, because -- we don't have a lot of energy, we don't have any vision, future doesn't look bright to us. We're kind of always tired, no matter how many good nights of rest we get. We're just stuck. Sometimes, when a person is stuck, I've noticed that they make some really bad decisions. They get into a place maybe where their relationship at home is tough or something else, and all of a sudden, somebody at work listens well, and the next thing you know, an emotional thing turns into a physical thing, and they have an affair. Now, I guarantee you they did not wake up one morning and say, "You know what? I want to go ruin my marriage. I think I would like to disgrace my name. I think I would like to betray my children, and I want to lose every friend that I have at church." People don't say that! I've never met one. What they do is, they wake up, life doesn't work. They're emotionally tired. Maybe

they're seething in unforgiveness. They press it down, they go to work. They never address it. And all of a sudden, the relationships they have -- maybe it's at work. Whatever the case may be. They get into that place where they just don't seem to be able to get untethered to whatever it is that binds them.

For the next five weeks, to launch our year, I want to deal with those issues. Five of them. Things that get us stuck, and how we can get unstuck so that we can then move next into a series on the grand adventure. Can't have an adventure if you're stuck. You can't! You can't have a great year if you're stuck! And some of you are. Some of you -- you wouldn't tell anybody. Maybe you've never told anyone. Maybe today for the first time, you're gonna tell yourself! "I'm stuck. I am. I'm that person." The first one I want to talk about is probably one that I think touches the larger percentage of Christians, and that is, this issue of shame. And it causes us to live in ways of secrecy and hiding from people. Even when we go to church and we're in the midst of a bunch of folks, what we realize is that we're keeping pretty significant secrets and telling no one. We're hiding.

It's like a gentleman who was a pastor that called a home, and he called this house, and he was gonna talk to these people. They were new to the church. And so, he got on the phone, he was calling them, and this little boy answered the phone. He didn't know how old Jimmy was, and he said, "Who's this?" and the little kid said, "This is Jimmy." Said, "Jimmy, are your mom and dad home?" "Well, my mom's home." "Can I talk with her?" "No, she's busy." "Okay, is your dad home?" "Yeah, he's home." "Can I talk with him?" "No, he's busy." Hmm. "Jimmy, is there anybody else there?" the pastor asked. And he goes, "Yeah. There's some police officers." "Can I talk to one of the police officers?" "No -- they're busy." "Jimmy, is there anyone else there?" "Yeah, there's some firemen here." "Can I talk to one of the firefighters?" "Nope. They're busy." "Jimmy -- what are they busy doing?" "Looking for me." It's cute when it's four. After you find them. It's not cute when you're 40. It's not cute when you're living in secrecy. It's not cute when you can't tell your boss the honest things about your life that you have jeopardized the company. It's not cute when you hold things from good friends. People you call a good friend, and you've never squared up with them. You're living a lie in a fairly significant area of your life. It's not cute. What causes us to do that? Same thing that caused Adam and Eve to do it -- sin.

There's a direct correlation between sin and shame. Whenever we feel this embarrassment for our sin, we do certain things, like Adam and Eve did. They were running around the garden, having a great time. They had a marvelous relationship with each other; they had a marvelous relationship with God -- and all of a sudden, Eve stepped foot into that place where she doubted God's character and she doubted God's word -- that's called temptation -- and she walked into sin, knowingly, with her husband right there as a buffoon standing next to her. What was the first thing that they did when they sinned? What does the Scripture say? They became aware of their nakedness. You say what? You sin against God -- yes. Whenever you sin against God, it always affects your horizontal relationships. And vice versa. They became aware of their sin, they became aware of their shame, and so, they sewed up some leaves to cover themselves, and then they went on an adventure -- an insane adventure, that strangely, a lot of Christians do -- and that is, they began to hide from God. Somehow thinking that Almighty God, all-knowing God can actually be hidden from. Jonah thought he could do it. Elijah thought he could do it. Zacchaeus thought he could do it. They hid. God comes to them -- "Adam, Adam, where are you?" What's he doing? He's hiding. Sin does that. Shame does that. It's different than guilt. Guilt makes you aware, "I've done something wrong and I need to repair it." Shame says there is something wrong with you. You're broken. Maybe even beyond repair.

Sin causes people to hide from God. It happens today. Sometimes you come to church. And we make fun of church -- "Yeah, I go to church, and I ask people how they're doing, they just say 'Fine.' It's so shallow." No, it's not. Get over yourself. It's not shallow. Do you really expect for somebody to come on a Sunday morning and say, "How are you doing?" "Well, I had an affair last night, and--" "Do you want

to talk about it?" No! They're not gonna do that. Now, if you take them out for coffee -- yes. You go to a community group where you have 45 minutes and you take some time and you ask a person how they're really doing -- expect it. If you're passing in the hallway -- no! But sometimes we can come to this place called the church, and we can go there for weeks, months, years. And we're hiding.

A friend of mine -- he had an affair. And it came out. They came in. We dealt with it. We were working as a family, working as a couple, and then he comes one day by himself. "Pastor -- love you, appreciate all the help you've given us. We're gonna go to another church." "Why? Anything wrong here?" "No, no. In fact, we're always gonna see you as our pastor, but -- we need a fresh start." "You mean, you need to lie?" "What do you mean?" I said, "Well -- what does it mean to have a fresh start? Fresh start means that I'm forgiven. A fresh start means that I am reconciled with God. A fresh start to you means you go to another church and never tell them about what you did. And so, they see you as somebody that you're really not." That's called hiding. That's being a person who's actually ashamed of his sin. I told him -- not because I was angry at him. I told him, "If you go, and then you empower shame, you're more likely than not to do it again." And by the way, he did. That's what happens when you hide. That's what happens when you live in secrecy. That's what happens when you kind of -- you know, I'm not saying you walk into the new church and say, "Hey! Guess what! I want you to know I'm an adulterer!" No -- but the reality is, where they were at, where he was at, in particular -- and that was the most important thing -- was, he had a group of men who knew his life, who knew his actions, and loved him. Loved him to forgiveness. Loved him to reconciliation. Loved him to the change of his heart. And he walked away from them. Why do we do that? Because sin causes us to hide from God.

But here's the crazy thing. And it is crazy -- but it's true. And Zacchaeus tells us the story. There's no hiding place from God. Who is Zacchaeus? Well, he's a tax-collector. That means everyone hated you. I mean, can you imagine that? I make a ton of money and I have no friends. Probably a lot of people that way. How did he get his money? Well, there's two reasons why people hated tax collectors. Number one, they predominantly worked for the Roman government, which made all of the Israelis really mad. Jews hated the Roman government, and you worked for the Roman government because they're the ones who levied the tax. And number two, they hated them because these guys could cheat you out of anything. They could charge you whatever you wanted. There wasn't fixed 10 percent, 15 percent. They could tax you on resources. They could tax you on services. They could tax you on property or, if you will, rights of passage to the roadway. Like Matthew was. He was out there on the roadway taxing people. And if you have a really popular roadway, with a lot of commerce, you can tax them even higher. It's kind of like if you've ever lived in a place where they tax you on these toll roads. You know, you're just -- every time you drive somewhere, you're paying money. I remember one in Colorado -- they promised us, after like 20 years, they said, "We're gonna take that off." Guess what -- it's been 40 years. They're not. Once they get those taxes, they love 'em!

And that's what it was like. He was one of those individuals. But what took him to another level -- Zacchaeus, that is -- is that he was a person who was, they said, he was a chief tax collector. What does that mean? It means he had a number of tax collectors under him. He had a ton of people that hated his guts. And so, one day Jesus was coming to Jericho. Now, it's towards the end of Luke, and it's towards the end of Jesus' life on this earth, and so, what He's doing is, He's headed towards Jerusalem, and He knows that He's going to die, and He's going to go there for a holy day -- for Passover -- and so, He's making His way. So, the festivities are already beginning, and the people are in the street, and they're all excited. And they hear that Jesus is coming. And so, Zacchaeus is interested. Why is he interested? Because every person that hides has this secret little part of them that says, "What would it be like to be fully known? Fully exposed? And done with the lies?" Zacchaeus goes out and says -- it says he was short. I think that's part of the reason. But as I was reading some this week, I noticed, one author was identifying this particular tree that Luke writes about, and says that he went to a sycamore

tree. It's a fig tree. And if you look at one of these, their leaves and their branches are very strong and very wide, and the leaves are huge. You can literally scurry up into the tree and sit at the trunk of the tree and not be seen by anyone. I wonder if Zacchaeus on that day -- this powerful, wealthy man -- though yes, short in stature, was more notably short in his heart. Meaning -- he was hiding. "I want to look at Jesus. I want to hear Him speak. I want to get a view of Him, but I am so afraid that He might see me."

It reminds me of a woman who came to Christ one day. Jesus is making His way, the Scripture says, through a crowded group of people. Meaning -- He's probably touched a hundred as He's walking through. And then a woman who the Scripture says had been bleeding, she'd been hemorrhaging for a number of years, and she reaches out and touches him. And Jesus is going through the crowd and all of a sudden, stops. And He turns around, and He says, "Who touched me?" Now, if I'm one of the disciples, I would say -- "Uh, which one of the hundred do you want me to get? There's a hundred people that touched you, Jesus!" "Who touched me?" And what happens to the woman? She's petrified. Because every person who lives in secret has a yearning to be seen but is scared to death that they will be. Why? Because it's then you can be rejected. It's then you can be exposed. Worse -- it's then you can be laughed at. But what he discovers is, there's no place you can hide. Strange -- Adam and Eve thought you could. Jonah thought you could. Elijah thought you could.

When Jesus reached the spot, He looked up, and He said to him, "Zacchaeus -- come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." I'm going to make the statement of the obvious, but you need to hear it, because Zacchaeus did -- there's no place that you're living right now, and there's no behavior that you're doing, and there's no behavior that you've ever done that God wasn't there watching. I don't say that to condemn you. I say that to recognize that if you're trying to live a secret life, you're stuck. And you're stuck in a place that doesn't make any sense. Why? Because God does see you. He sees your behavior. In fact, the Scripture says He sees the thoughts and the intentions of my heart. He knows every day what motivates me. He knows every day the purity or the lack thereof of my motive.

There's no hiding place from God. That could be a frightening thing or it can be a marvelous thing if you know the rest of this text. Because what happens next? All the people -- verse 7 -- saw this and began to mutter. "He is gone to be guest of a sinner." What does that mean? He's gone to a person's house that has no capability of worshiping in the temple. This man is unclean, and by the way, if Jesus goes to his house, He's unclean, and His disciples know that He's headed to the Passover, and it's not a good thing to not celebrate Passover -- and you can't if you're unclean. "Jesus, let's not do this." "Oh, Zacchaeus -- I want to go over to your house." Verse 8: "Zacchaeus stood up, said to the Lord, 'Look Lord! Here and now, I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody -- and most surely, I have -- out of anything I'll pay it back four times.'" How did he get there? How did he get from hiding in a tree to, "Lord, I'll give away half of everything I have"? Now, let me tell you what -- this is a greedy man. This is a man whose idolatry was what? Money. And all of a sudden, he's like, "I'll give it half away! In fact, if I've cheated anybody, I'll give him four times!" What got him there? It's gonna seem really not very powerful unless you've experienced it. It's acceptance. Because when you're living in secret, the most powerful thing you can ever experience is to come clean and have somebody love you. It's true not only of Christ -- it's true of people.

A good friend of mine was planning a weekend away with his wife, and they were driving away, the kids had been taken care of. And he was going up the interstate, and he was excited -- man, they were gonna have the greatest weekend. And for some crazy, silly, stupid reason, they start having this conversation, and it's about things that people struggle with, and temptation -- he's in the ministry, by the way -- and they're having all of these issues that he's dealt with and help people. And finally, out of nowhere, for some crazy reason his wife asks him, "Have you ever struggled with porn?" And my friend

was sitting there driving thinking, "Ah well, I think I'm gonna take an exit and go back home. This weekend's gonna be horrible. She's not gonna wanna touch me. I can lie and have a good weekend, but I'll live with it. I can tell the truth and have a horrible weekend, and she probably won't speak to me for days, weeks. I don't want to get in the habit of lying." So, he made a choice -- "I'm gonna tell her the truth." "I have. There have been times where -- I don't fully understand the reason, but there have been times that I've looked at it. It's not about you," he said to her. "It's me. And I'm sorry." He's driving, clicking exits and he's trying to figure out which one to take. He looks over at her, and she's crying. She reaches over and she puts her hand on his leg, and says to him, "I am so sorry." "Sorry? For what?" "I know you. And I know you would never want to hurt me. I can't imagine the pressure you must be under that causes you to want that kind of relief. What can I do to help strengthen your heart so that you can live the way you want?"

I asked my friend as he was unpacking that weekend, "What did you think when her hand touched your leg?" He thought, "That's not what I expected. My face? Yes." Now, I'll quote as closely as I can. "I've never felt that vulnerable and honest and loved at the same time." I said, "When she was talking with you, did you feel anything about this battle that you've had over the years?" He said, "I've never in my life felt so passionate about living a holy life for her." You see, my friends -- divine acceptance doesn't solicit more sin. It doesn't cheapen it, it doesn't remove it, doesn't say it didn't happen. Doesn't say there's no consequence. There was consequence for this sin -- Jesus died. But divine acceptance doesn't perpetuate sin. It transforms. I want to give away half of everything I have. You say, well man, he had a ton of money. You find me a rich, greedy materialist who wants to give away half of everything that he has. And -- four times to anyone that he's ever cheated. His entire life he's cheated people! What was the change? "Zac, I want to go to your house, and I want to eat with you. I know everything about you and I love you." How do you get there? Number one, you've got to be willing. And this is a hard one -- you have to be willing to admit that you're a ragged man. You have to be willing to admit. And he did. I believe when he said, "I have cheated people, yes, and I will pay back four times," and Jesus said, in that moment, verse 9 -- "Today salvation has come." Now, either you have to conclude that he found the magic price -- four times -- for salvation, or Jesus recognized that he was admitting what? "I'm a sinner. I'm coming out of secrecy and hiding and I want to tell you, Christ -- I am what people say I am." All the people saw, and they said, "Yup, he's a sinner." And for the first time, Zacchaeus has said, "Absolutely."

But it's most than just saying you're a sinner -- probably most of us could do that. You have to admit that you have a debt that you cannot pay. Where does this come in the text? Let's go back and look at it for a moment. He says -- "I want to give away half of what I have to the poor, and if I've cheated anyone, and most surely I have" -- that's kind of the inference that he's saying -- "I will pay back four times the amount." Now, where does that come from? Why not five times? Why not ten times? Why four? Because Zacchaeus knows the Bible. If you go back to Exodus, chapter 22, verse 1, it tells you that -- there's a law -- if you have taken something, if you have taken something that cannot be repaid, if you told something that could not be restored -- you took something, you sold it. In other words, you have no ability to meet this debt -- four times. I don't think the four times is the point. And I'll tell you why. It's because what does Jesus say? "Today salvation has come to your house. Today you are in the lineage and the family of Abraham." What was Abraham known for? His faith. Having a debt that he couldn't pay and Christ provided the provision. If you want to move out of shame, you have to admit that you have a debt that you can't pay. As David said, "I have not just sinned against people, I've sinned against God. And because of that, I can't meet this debt. I can't pay it." And when we come to that point, where we recognize that God has to do it -- that's the place where shame is rendered powerless.

In 1994, some friends of ours -- Dave and Debbie Forsyth -- were in Denver, and they were pastoring -- not in our church, but in another sister church, and they accepted a call to move to Minnesota. We cheered

them on. Great, great couple. They had two little girls, and so, they were moving to Minnesota. And when they got to Minnesota, I'd heard about it, because I'd pastored, you know, with him in the city for a long time. One of the tragedies happened -- eight months into their new move and new location, and Debbie was diagnosed with cancer. The doctor told her, "This is not a death sentence. If you receive chemo and radiation, you've got far in excess of a 90 percent chance of living. We've caught it early. There's a lot of hope for you." The problem -- she was pregnant. And the doctor said, "If you receive chemo and radiation, the probability is virtually 100 percent it'll kill the child." They went home and they prayed. They came to the point where Debbie in particular said, "I can't selfishly take my life and kill a child." So, she didn't receive the chemo and the radiation. She gave birth to a little girl -- this was her third. And weeks after their child was born, Debbie died. You may disagree with the decision. But what she chose in that moment was to give life to her daughter, which cost her hers. That's exactly the reason why Jesus could say to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation is come to you." Because Christ left Heaven and He hung on a cross to pay a debt that you and I couldn't pay. It cost Him His life. You say, "Well, He knew He was gonna be raised from the dead." Go ahead -- you also know that you're gonna be raised from the dead. Go ahead and allow people to put you up on a cross and throw spears -- or, you know, nails through your hands. No want to no no no. Yes, He knew He was going to be raised from the dead. AND, by the way, I don't think the nails were the piercing, painful part. I think it's the cup of wrath that was poured onto Him which was your sin and mine. And for the first time, Christ, the second person of the trinity, was separated from the Father.

If you're going to receive the acceptance of Christ, then you have to admit, "I have a debt that I cannot pay. And it took the life of Christ to pay it." But if you do, and when you do, you need to know that Jesus' acceptance can free you. It did Zacchaeus. "Lord -- I will give half of my possessions to the poor. And by the way, if I've cheated anyone -- and I have -- guarantee I have -- I'll pay four times." When Christ divinely loves you, it has the capacity to break that which was an idol in your life. I think money was an idol for Zacchaeus. I think it owned his life. I think he was willing to sacrifice other people's livelihood. I think he was willing to sacrifice his friends. I think he was willing to sacrifice anything so that he could become a rich man. And in a moment, and all it took was for Jesus to say, "I know you. And I want to come over to your house and eat. I love you." And in that moment, when you own who you are, and instead of condemnation and hatred and separation and brutal language, you get divine acceptance - - my friends, it doesn't produce licentious living. It transforms you.

Grace doesn't produce a person who wants to take advantage of others. Grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness. Grace teaches us to crucify our idols and to be free from them. You name the sin, you name the secret, you name the shame -- and what will free that person? More likely than not, it's not another accountability group. But it's a person who will look you in the eye and say, "I know everything about you, and I love you. And I'm not walking away from you." We have to admit that we have a debt, and when we do, Jesus has a gift. It's called salvation. And His offer is this -- there's no condemnation for anyone who lives in Christ Jesus. There's a freedom.

Some of you are not believers, and Christ is offering you for the first time -- "You can get rid of the shame if you will accept my love." But others of you are believers, and you still are stuck. You're very much like a woman who -- sometimes on our Good Friday services, we've had a cross up, and we've told people, "Hey -- you know, you can write a sin or a struggle or something like that, you can nail it up to the cross." And it's our way of saying, "Christ took care of that." I love those events. A friend of mine did this -- not with Good Friday, but with baptism. They were to write their sin, and they were to nail it on the cross as a means of saying that the cross has taken care of that sin, "And my baptism is my declaration that I accept the forgiveness of Christ." And so, on this given day, this woman came, and then she wrote her pastor a note. "I remember my fear. In fact, it was the most fear I remember in my life. I wrote as tiny as I could on the piece of paper the word 'Abortion.' I was so scared that someone would open that paper

and read it and find out that it was me. I wanted to get up, and I wanted to walk out of the auditorium during the service. The guilt and the fear were that strong when my turn came. But I walked towards the cross. I pinned the paper there. And then I was directed to a pastor to be baptized. He looked me straight in the eyes, and I thought for sure that he was going to read my note. I kept it from everyone for so long. But instead, when he looked me in the eye, I felt like God was telling me, 'I love you. It's okay. You've been forgiven.' I felt so much love for me, a terrible sinner. It's the first time." Listen to this -- "It's the first time I ever really felt forgiven."

Was she a believer before that? Probably. Because a lot of believers are living in hiding -- secrets -- ashamed that somebody might know. My friends, that affects you. It does. It steals energy from you. It gives the enemy a tool to beat you up. It depletes you of passion and vision for the future. And so -- I finish with a couple of questions. Are you hiding? Are you here in this large church and you realize nobody really knows your story, because you're afraid if they did, they'd want to leave you? Have you allowed Christ to forgive you? Have you allowed others to forgive you? Have you forgiven yourself? And have you invited Christ home into your life to set you free? Divine acceptance doesn't solicit and produce more sin. Doesn't. It transforms, and gives a shamed sinner the power to crucify an idol. It can happen with you.

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